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SUBJECT: Uzbekistan: TIP Interim Assessment

11. (U) In response to reftel, post submits the following information for the TIP Interim Assessment on Uzbekistan.

1A. Substantive Action to End the Use of Forced Labor During the Cotton Harvest

Uzbekistan took some steps to end forced labor during the annual cotton harvest, specifically addressing child labor. The Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (MoL) on June 26 issued a list of jobs with unfavorable working conditions in which children below the age of 18 cannot be involved. Cotton picking was specifically noted on that list. Further, legislation is currently in the lower house of parliament (Oliy Majlis) that reportedly will impose penalties for involving children in such jobs. The Ministry of Education (MoE) reported in October that it asked school directors throughout the country to certify that they would not send students to participate in the cotton harvest. The MoE also reported that it sent letters to local hokims asking them not to close the schools during the harvest.

These advances did make some positive impacts. Although school closings were reported in most districts, classes generally remained in operation for children under twelve years old, whereas in the past, younger students were directed to participate in the harvest. (Note: Younger children did participate at the direction of their parents, in some cases.) In the Bukhara district, one analyst reported that the number of children in the fields was three times less than in years past. In Namangan, a city in the Ferghana Valley, the regional governor explicitly directed local administrators not to direct children to the fields, resulting in significantly fewer children working in the harvest this year.

The GOU did not take measurable steps to reduce adult forced labor in the cotton sector, and some reports suggest that more government workers, such as those generally providing social services, were sent to work in the fields this year.

1B. Implementing the National Anti-Trafficking Action Plan

Uzbekistan continues to make progress on the implementation of its Anti-Trafficking Action Plan. The National Interagency Commission established last year to combat TIP meets regularly and coordinates the actions of the various ministries involved in anti-TIP efforts. The MoL has an aggressive TIP awareness campaign, working closely with television, radio, and newspapers to promote awareness of TIP issues. The MoL has conducted seminars this year with local hokims (city administrators) and mahallah committees (neighborhood administrative units) to educate them about TIP problems. The General Prosecutor's Office distributes pamphlets to border crossing posts for distribution to the public. The Republican Rehabilitation Center, the first state-sponsored facility for victims of TIP, was not opened earlier in the year as expected, but reportedly will open before the end of this calendar year. (Note: Poloff toured the facility in October, and it appeared to be in the final stages of preparations.) The Ministry of Internal Affairs has increased its staffing for TIP monitoring throughout the districts. The GOU has improved cooperation and communication with several other countries, conducting study trips to France, Italy, the UA, and Moldova, and working closely with counterparts in Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and the UAE. Finally, the MoL is in the process of initiating a new program to assist victims of trafficking to find employment. Under this program, the MoL will have a database of open jobs and will recommend possible

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opportunities to victims based on their interests and locations. If a trafficking victim does not have adequate experience or skills to qualify for a job, the MoL will help with training and a stipend to adequately prepare the person for employment.

1C. Continuing to work with UNICEF and Improve Cooperation with ILO to Reduce the Reliance on Forced Labor during the Annual Cotton Harvest

Uzbekistan continues to work with UNICEF to address efforts to reduce reliance on child labor during the annual cotton harvest. UNICEF conducted an awareness campaign on child labor, directed at parents and school administrators, throughout most districts in the country. The GOU allowed UNICEF to do some monitoring of child labor in the cotton fields this year. Although its report has not yet been completed, UNICEF states that it was able to observe fields in almost every district of the country. The GOU has not worked in cooperation with the ILO this year.

1D. Allowing International Experts to Conduct an Independent Assessment of the Use of Forced Labor during the Annual Cotton Harvest

Beyond the limited monitoring conducted by UNICEF, Uzbekistan has not invited international experts to conduct an independent assessment of the use of forced labor during the annual cotton harvest. There were indications that a broader assessment of child labor throughout the Uzbek economy might be a possibility, but the GOU has taken no steps to develop that idea.

1E. Investigating, Prosecuting, Convicting, and Sentencing Government Officials Complicit in Trafficking

Uzbekistan has not released any data on the investigation, prosecution, conviction, or sentencing of government officials complicit in trafficking.

F. Providing Financial or In-Kind Support to Anti-Trafficking NGOs to Provide Assistance and Shelter for Victims

Uzbekistan has not provided financial or in-kind support to anti-trafficking NGOs to provide assistance and shelter for victims. Despite this, NGOs have reported continued good relations with government interlocutors. They reported receiving support in things like managing relations with the neighbors of the shelter in Tashkent and in developing new programs to help victims of trafficking find employment.

G. Taking Steps to Establish Additional Shelters Outside of Tashkent

The MoL reported in November that it is looking at various regional

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centers to determine where the next shelter for victims of TIP should be placed, and will base the location on the number of victims reported in each region. The Ferghana Valley and the Samarkand/Bukhara areas were mentioned as likely possibilities. The MoL reported that it will give more attention to this issue after the Tashkent center is opened and implementers are able to apply lessons learned from that process.

H. Continued Efforts to Improve the Collection of Law Enforcement Trafficking Data

The Ministry of Internal Affairs reported in October that it is completing a joint project with the UNODC, started in 2007, of creating a specialized database of trafficking cases. The MIA hopes to complete work on the database this year and to be able to use it to track trends in the TIP area starting in early 2010.

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